

***The Institution of Engineers, Australia: Sydney Division
Engineering Heritage Committee***

Oral History Program: Biographical Notes

**Peter Stroud LANGFORD (1920 -)
Aeronautical Engineer**

- Birth & Family:** Peter was born on the 9th November 1920 in Killara, Sydney. At the time, his parents were living in New Guinea but his mother returned to her parents for the birth. At the age of six weeks he returned to New Guinea where his father was working as a mining engineer and a geologist. He later married a girl from Melbourne.
- Education:** Primary - Dalcross, Pymble and Wyong Public School
Barker College, Hornsby - Sir Thomas Anderson Stuart Medal 1938 - leadership, scholarship and sport. Dux 1937-1938. School Vice Captain. Vice Captain of cricket, football and athletics.
- Qualifications:** Bachelor of Engineering in Aeronautical Engineering, Sydney University, 1939-1942.
- Memberships:** Thrice (?) delegate to the British Commonwealth Aeronautical Advisory Research Council.

Twice (?) delegate to the International Civil Aviation Organisation, Vice Chairman for the third Air Navigation Conference in 1956.
(Alignment problems with this and the following)

Delegate to Tri-partite Airworthiness co-operation conference between Britain, India and Australia.
Australian Aeronautical Research Council (1957-1973)
The Royal Aeronautical Society – Fellow. (President of the Australian Division in 1969-1971).
The American Institute of Astronautics and Aeronautics – Fellow. (resigned 1983).
The Institution of Engineers, Australia, Associate Member.
Haileybury College, Melbourne – 1958 -1976 member of Governing Council, made 'Life Governor' in 1976.
- Awards:** Member in the General Division of the Order of Australia Medal, 1985.
- Work History:** In 1942 Hawker de Havilland Ltd approached Sydney University for assistance. Peter was among the final year aeronautical engineering students seconded to test and perform stress design on a troop carrying glider. In 1943 he joined the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation (CAC) as the Assistant Design Engineer and concentrated on flight testing until he left CAC at the end of 1944. In 1943 it was decided that all aeronautical engineering graduates should undergo flight training so they would better understand the vehicles they were working with. Peter went to Benalla, Victoria, and completed training in Tiger Moths at the RAAF Elementary Flying School.

At the end of 1944 he went to the RAAF officer training school and was posted to Number 5 Aircraft Depot in Wagga, but by the end of the war,

the nearest he had got to combat was the maintenance group in Sydney. In 1946 he joined the Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) in Melbourne as a Senior Aeronautical Engineer in charge of structures, a role he held until 1954. Some of the projects he was involved in with DCA included the setting up of airworthiness standards, writing and issuing Air Navigation Orders, testing aeroplanes and approving modifications and changes made to aircraft.

In 1954 he was appointed Supervising Aeronautical Engineer at DCA and held the position until 1957, when he was appointed Director of Airworthiness. Until 1975 he also held the position of Senior Assistant Director – General (Airworthiness) at the Department of Transport. From 1975/6 he was the Regional Director of the Victorian/Tasmanian region and in 1977 he was made Director of the New South Wales region, a position he held until his retirement in 1983.

In Peter's view the biggest aircraft problem in Australia since WWII was metal fatigue. In an attempt to find a solution to this problem, he was sent to consult with aeronautical engineers overseas. He had some twenty papers published in Australia and overseas and delivered some fifteen technical lectures in both Australia and the rest of the world. He was the original author of the four aviation biographies in the book "The Engineers – 200 years at work for Australia" published by The Institution of Engineers, Australia in 1988.

Prepared by Patricia Taaffe, February 2003 from oral history interview conducted on 01.03.99. (*Align left*)